

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E   –   F O R   I M M E D I A T E   R E L E A S E**

## **New L.A. Space Center Welcomes Home Apollo Capsule**

**Test space capsule on loan from the National Air & Space Museum is one of the many science exhibits at the Columbia Memorial Space Center.**

DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA (July 14, 2008) – Organizers of the Columbia Memorial Space Center (CMSC) announced today that BP-19—a test version of the Apollo space capsule—would be transported on July 16th from Lancaster’s Apollo Park to their new Downey education center. BP-19 was constructed in Downey by North American Aviation in 1963 and used in many parachute drop tests.

“I am especially pleased that BP-19 will be returning to its birthplace where it was designed and built—Downey, California,” says Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Curator, Allan A. Needell, “and that BP-19 will be part of an interactive exhibit designed to inform and motivate the public about the rich aerospace history in California, including the manufacture and testing of Apollo Command Modules and capsules.”

The new, 18,000 sq. ft., two-story Columbia Memorial Space Center, designed by Arquitectonica and built by Tower General Contractors in Los Angeles, has a fluid shape and a stunning silver exterior. At its base are angled windows that give the visual impression that the structure is floating on the landscape—like a ship on water.

The exhibit featuring the Apollo BP-19 will have graphic panels and touch-screen computers providing engaging information on the Apollo missions, the structure and function of command modules, and the testing involved in making capsules safe for astronauts. Designed to inspire the public’s interest in space exploration, the Command Module exhibit is one of many interactive exhibits at the new center including rocket launchers, drop tests, a Space Shuttle simulator, a robotics lab, a computer lab, and a Challenger Learning Center for guided mission simulations.

“Apollo boilerplate number 19’s homecoming is important because it shows—along with its sister spacecraft boilerplate 12—the beginnings of the Apollo Lunar Program in its test phases,” explains Dr. James Busby, Director of Public and Media Relations at Downey’s Aerospace Legacy Foundation. “The two modules answered the basic questions about whether three people could survive launching and landing in a single craft.”

“Many people don’t know that thousands of aircraft and 20 real spaceships were designed and built in Downey over a 70-year period.” adds Jon Betthauser, the Executive Director at the Columbia Memorial Space Center. “We will change that, while providing all kinds of ways to learn about what’s happening in space exploration right now and in the future.”

The rigorous safety tests employed on Apollo BP-19 will also be used on its successor—the Orion—NASA’s newest vehicle. Substantially larger in diameter than the Apollo space capsules, the Orion capsules can carry up to six astronauts. Orion will be able to dock with the International Space Station, and will eventually return humans back to the Moon.

NASA and the National Air & Space Museum have supported the move of the historic Apollo test capsule in conjunction with strong local support from Aerospace Legacy Foundation, Industrial Realty Group, Downey Studios, Dunkel Bros. Machinery Moving Inc., and the L.A. County Department of Parks & Recreation.

Named an official national memorial to the Space Shuttle *Columbia* by a joint resolution of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the Columbia Memorial Space Center will honor the crew of STS-107 lost on February 1, 2003—Commander Rick Husband, Pilot Willie McCool, Mission Specialists Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark and David Brown, Payload Commander Michael Anderson, and Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon.

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